

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2930

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to expanding the pool of qualified teachers.

Brief Description: Expanding the pool of qualified teachers.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Sells, Carlyle, Anderson and Haler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/26/10, 1/29/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Gives priority in receipt of conditional scholarships and loan repayments through the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment (Future Teachers) and the Alternate Route Conditional Scholarship (Alt Route) programs to individuals seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the Professional Educator Standards Board as well as those individuals that are uniquely qualified to help schools succeed in addressing the achievement gap.
- Reduces student eligibility for the Future Teachers program from five years to two years.
- Adds a loan repayment benefit to the Alt Route program.
- Authorizes the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to provide either conditional scholarships or loan repayments through the Future Teachers and the Alt Route up to the cost of attendance or \$15,000 per academic year, beginning in the 2013-14 academic year.
- Specifies that the HECB must make annual loan repayments of up to \$3,000 per year for up to 10 years or until the amount of the loan repayment award provided is reached.
- Allows the Future Teachers and the Alt Route to be awarded together.
- Allows conditional-scholarship awards to be used for any educational or personal expense.

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Haler, Hasegawa and White.

Staff: Andi Smith (786-7304).

Background:

Future Teachers Program.

In 2004 the Legislature modified an existing, but inactive, conditional-scholarship program so that it could be a flexible vehicle for targeting teacher-shortage areas. The Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program (Future Teachers) was established. It was designed to encourage outstanding students and paraprofessionals to become teachers and to encourage current teachers to obtain additional endorsements in teacher-shortage subjects.

Participants agree to teach in Washington K-12 public schools in return for conditional scholarships or loan repayments. Selection criteria include academic ability, contributions to the public school system, potential to serve as a positive role model for students, length of time until completion of the education program, and commitment to serve as a Washington classroom teacher. Each year the Legislature can designate subjects to receive selection priority if the applicants commit to teaching those subjects. Math, science, and special education are often among the priority designated subjects. Participants can receive conditional scholarships or loan repayments for up to five years. Award amounts cannot exceed tuition and fees at the participant's college or university, or full-time resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the University of Washington – whichever is lower.

Alternate Route Conditional Scholarship Program.

The Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification Conditional Loan Scholarship Program (Alt Route) was created to help school districts recruit teachers in subjects and geographic areas with teacher shortages. Funding is provided for students enrolled in alternative routes to teacher-certification programs, approved by the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB).

The programs are aimed at experienced paraeducators and midcareer professionals with expertise in subject areas in which Washington has shortages. The Alt Routes are typically more intensive and shorter in length than traditional teacher-certification routes based on mentored internships and on-site training. As of this month, 772 people have transitioned to a new career, teaching in statewide- and geographic-shortage areas, through the Alt Route. Ninety-seven percent of the Alt Route candidates have entered Washington's teaching force upon completion of their program.

Much like the Future Teachers, students receiving funding through the Alt Route agree to teach in specified subject-shortage areas in Washington K-12 schools, in return for conditional-loan scholarships. The PESB determines the shortage areas, selects the recipients, and administers the Alt Route. The HECB serves as the fiscal agent for the Alt Route.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The legislation makes changes to two separate loan programs: the Future Teachers and the Alt Route.

Changes to the Future Teachers.

The HECB is directed to give priority in selecting scholarship recipients to those individuals who are seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the PESB as well as individuals who are uniquely qualified to help schools address the achievement gap. Eligibility for the program is reduced from five years to two years.

Beginning with the 2013-14 academic year the HECB may provide students with both conditional scholarships and loan repayment benefits up to the total cost of attendance or \$15,000, whichever is lower. Currently, the amount of conditional scholarship or loan repayment is capped in statute at the amount of tuition and fees charged at the institution attended by the participant or at the University of Washington, whichever is lower. In providing the loan repayment benefit, the HECB is required to pay up to \$3,000 per year on federal student loans over a period of 10 years or until the total loan repayment award has been satisfied.

Conditional scholarships and loan repayments may be awarded in conjunction with other financial assistance, including the Alt Route. The scholarships may also be used for any educational or personal expenses.

Changes to the Alt Route.

The PESB is directed to give priority in selecting scholarship recipients to those individuals who are seeking specialty endorsements in math approved by the PESB as well as individuals who are uniquely qualified to help schools address the achievement gap.

Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year a loan repayment component is added to the existing conditional-scholarship program. The PESB may provide loan repayment up to the total cost of attendance at the institution attended by the participant or \$15,000 whichever is lower. In providing the loan repayment benefit, the HECB – acting as fiscal agent -- must pay up to \$3,000 per year on federal student loans over a period of 10 years or until the total loan repayment award has been satisfied.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill moves the effective date of the Alt Route back to the 2013-14 academic year and adds a loan repayment option to the Alt Route. The substitute bill no longer creates two separate programs -- one for conditional scholarships and one for loan repayment. Instead, it increases the amount of the awards made through the Future Teachers and the Alt Route to cover the full cost of attendance or \$15,000 per academic year, whichever is less. Provisions that required a separate appropriation for each purpose of the Future Teachers are also removed.

The substitute bill removes provisions that would have had the HECB assume monthly loan-repayment obligations on behalf of students and replaces it with a requirement that the HECB make annual payments of up to \$3,000 for up to 10 years or until the total amount of the loan repayment provided is reached. The HECB is authorized to provide payments directly to lenders.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) We appreciate any effort to bring teachers into the field prepared, especially math, science, and the achievement gap. The HECB supports the measure and appreciates the administrative clarity provided in the substitute. The awards recognize a higher value per each award and that provides a stronger incentive for people considering teaching. The Alt Route is an excellent route for military people considering the teaching profession. The Troops to Teachers program is made up of a majority of men and has minority-student participation. We support any program that supports Alt Route.

The Alt Route makes it possible to become a teacher. If it were not for these opportunities, many people would not be able to enter the teaching profession. This program has a huge impact on African-American participation. Many times, African Americans don't go into teaching right away because it doesn't pay very much. Later in life, as we mature, we want to go into teaching for social justice reasons. The Alt Route provides a way to do that - to get certified quickly - and with the conditional scholarships and loans, we can still make ends meet.

Washington has experienced rapid growth in Latino populations but we don't have the capacity in the teaching workforce to mirror our own population. About 92 percent of teachers are white and if we do not resolve our recruitment problems around getting teachers of color into the system, we face a crisis. This bill eliminates financial barriers and allows people to really consider becoming a teacher because people don't have to put their lives on hold to go to school. However, what this bill lacks is a programmatic effort to expand capacity. We need to increase the amount of student-support services, because without them,

students will fail. Washington must put someone in charge of closing the achievement gap. This type of change requires a systematic and concerted effort. We need to change what we currently equate with excellence, like results on a test. Minorities have historically not done well on these tests and if you set up the system based on these measures, then minorities will not fully participate. Washington State University Vancouver is ready to take on this challenge. We are serious, we are committed and, we want to turn our students into tax payers, not tax consumers.

It is critical that Washington provide a means to educate the teacher core for the next generation of students. The Evergreen State College program has students from all areas of Washington because the campus is one that focuses on disenfranchised students, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students. We serve the needs of the neediest. The bill encourages these students to go into teaching by removing the debt burden. Our campus has some of the brightest adult learners, who have experienced life, many of whom have children in the public education system. The bill does not include a priority for special education, which should be included. We need to train teachers that reflect the population that is in the room. Students often don't identify with education because it is an acculturation process and this bill begins to address the resources sufficient to help bring a diversity of teachers to the process.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Wallace, prime sponsor; David Brenna, Professional Educators Standards Board; John Klacik, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Robert Jones and Erin Jones, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Armando Laguardia, Washington State University-Vancouver; and Artee Young, The Evergreen State College - Tacoma.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.